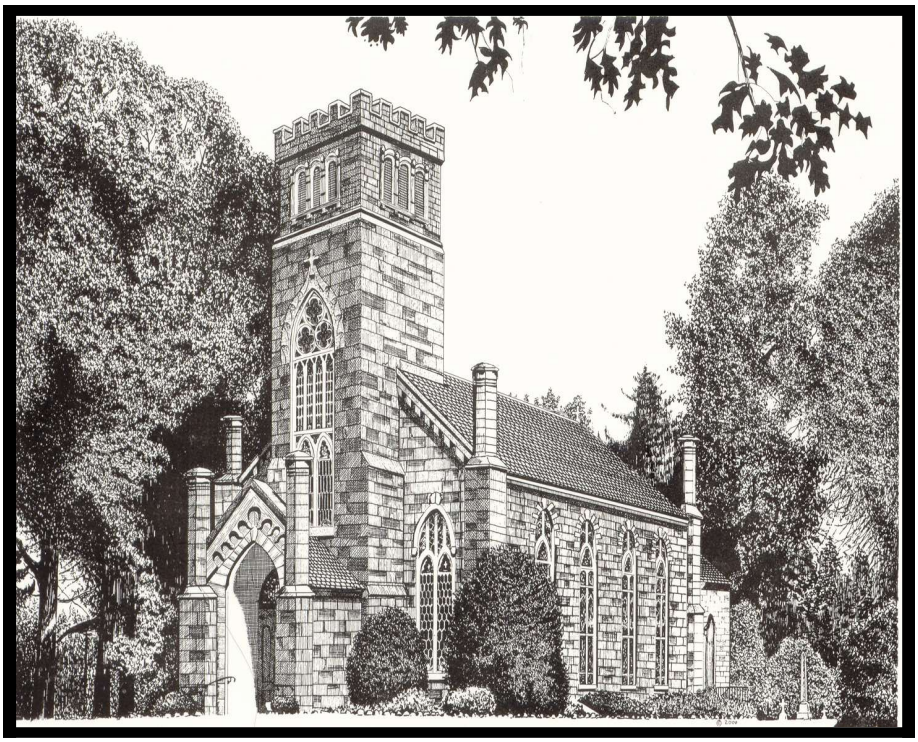


The Celebration and Blessing of A Marriage At Grace Episcopal Church

Keswick, Virginia

01.14.25

Contents

About Grace Church, including physical and mail addresses, page 3
The Opus 77 Capital Project, page 4
Christian Marriage in the Context of Living Together and Civil Marriage, pages 4-6
The Nature of Christian Marriage, page 6
Weddings at Grace Church and Other Venues, page 7
Requirements for Christian Marriage at Grace, pages 7-8
Remarriages, pages 8-9
Religious and Spiritual Counseling, page 9
Pre-Marital Counseling, pages 9-10
Clergy, page 10
Liturgy, pages 10
Music, page 11
Wedding Direction, page 11
Fees, page 11-12
Applying for Christian Marriage at Grace Church, page 12
First Meeting with the Clergy, pages 12
Final Meeting with the Clergy, page 13
Flowers, page 13
Photography, page 13
Alcohol, page 13
Timing, page 13
Church Capacity and Parking, page 14
Program, page 14
Marriage License and Certificate, pages 14
All Saints Chapel, page 14
Religious and Spiritual Life Worksheet, page 15
Premarital Counseling Questions, page 16
The Declaration of Intention, page 17
Program Outline: The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage (prayer book), pages 18-19
Program Outline: The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage (2015 version), pages 20-21
Full Text of the Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage (prayer book), pages 22-25
Full Text of the Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage (2015 version), pages 26-34
Checklist, page 35

About Grace Church

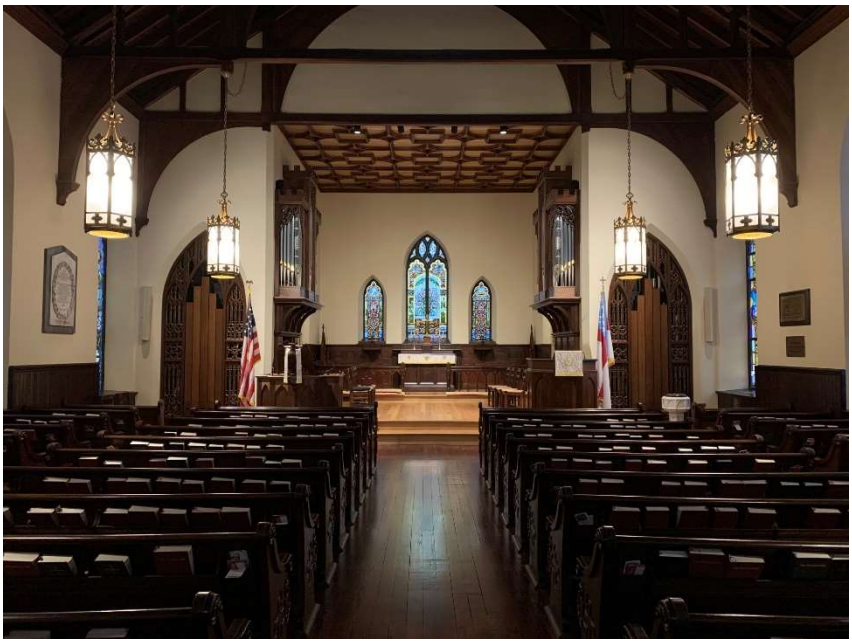
The Vestry of the Fredericksville Parish of the Church of England commissioned a church for this site in 1745. First known as the Middle Church, and later called Walker's Church, it was located in the front yard of the present building. Thomas Jefferson attended the nearby classical school of the Rev. James Maury, who was rector here and is buried in the front yard of the church. Jefferson served on the parish Vestry from 1767-1770. The present building was named Grace, designed and built in the Gothic Revival style by the architect William Strickland, consecrated in 1855, burned forty years later, and re-consecrated in 1896. An extensive renovation and restoration of the church, including the installation of a Taylor & Boody "Opus 77" organ, was accomplished in 2019. The parish hall was built in 1933 and renovated in 1971 and 2002. All Saints Chapel was built in 1929 as a mission to Stony Point. A parish hall was added there in 2016. Grace Church and All Saints Chapel worship according to The Book of Common Prayer which has a long history of use, dating back to ancient Christian sources and the English Reformation of the 16th century. Grace Church has been blessing hounds, fox hunters, horses, and foxes every Thanksgiving morning since 1929. Grace Church is a diverse congregation from many different backgrounds engaged in worship, great music, fellowship, Christian formation, and outreach to the community, including our food closet and the annual Farm Tour. We open wide the doors of the church to all who desire sincerely to worship the eternal God whom Jesus revealed. We offer our church for the cure of souls who doubt and for the persuasion of those who have found faith difficult; for the encouragement of the discouraged; for the consecration of the strong; for the inspiration of all who face life daringly; and for the ever deepening assurance of the life eternal.

In 2015, Grace Church was listed as one of "14 Amazing Churches in Virginia" that are "beyond beautiful" on http://www.onlyinyourstate.com/virginia/14-churches-in-va/ .

Grace Church is located at 5607 Gordonsville Road in Keswick. The mailing address is PO Box 43, Keswick, VA 22947. For more information, please consult our website at www.gracekeswick.org. The phone number is 434-293-3549.

The Opus 77 Capital Project

During 2019 Grace Church received a Taylor & Boody "Opus 77" tracker organ and completed an extensive renovation and restoration of the church building. The benefits include improved music, acoustics, sound amplification, lighting, expanded floor space in and near the chancel, and a new rear gallery.



Christian Marriage in the Context of Living Together and Civil Marriage

One of the unexpected blessings of the evolving changes, diversity, and confusion in intimate relationships in the 21st century has been the opportunity it affords the Church to clarify its own understanding of Christian marriage.

Couples choose to be in a relationship for a variety of emotional, physical, material, spiritual, and practical reasons. There are many reasons to be drawn together—discerning whether or not they are reasons for marriage--civil or Christian--is the question.

Generally speaking, those who are drawn not only toward each other but further toward marriage glimpse the possibility of building a life together that can be greater than the sum of its parts. They experience a "we" that they clearly want to continue into the future and not only enjoy in the present.

Those who seek civil marriage are granted basic property and childcare rights between two individuals in case of death or divorce and decision-making rights in times of crisis. Stable civil marriages make possible a greater likelihood of economic stability for the couple and for society. Any children born within a stable civil marriage may more likely receive the nurture they need to be stable and productive members of society themselves. Stable civil marriages potentially provide a secure environment for the personal growth of the couple and a bulwark against unforeseen changes and losses that come in a lifetime as each help and support the other.

Those who seek a Christian marriage are afforded the same opportunities as a civil marriage and also bring specific Christian values to bear on their relationship:

- They intend a lifelong, exclusive union.
- They intend mutual self-giving.
- They seek the support of Christian community to help them understand and sustain their vows through regular participation in the life and worship of the Church.
- They seek the spiritual support of God in Christ to help them fulfill and sustain their vows.
- They are open to experiencing their vows as helping them grow into a deeper knowledge and love of God.
- They are open to experiencing that which is drawing them into marriage as a calling from God and as part of their vocation.
- They intend to have any children baptized and brought up in the life and worship of the Church.
- They intend their marriage to become a source of good within the Church and in society.

And so it is possible to seek the form of relationship and its public recognition as may be most appropriate to a couple's intentions. It is now clearer than before that a Christian marriage is specifically appropriate for committed Christians as well as those who may seek to discover or renew their relationship to the Christian path.

A civil marriage may also be most appropriate to a couple's self-understanding, at least in the beginning of their relationship. There always remains the possibility of receiving the blessing of their civil marriage in the Church at a later time if their values evolve toward a Christian vocation. In fact, in the beginning of the history of the Church all marriages were first conducted by civil authorities and then, those who felt so called, sought a Christian blessing at church at a later date.

It is also possible that neither a civil nor Christian marriage is appropriate at a specific time in a couple's lives. They are still searching and exploring, things remain unresolved and open, or circumstances will not yet permit a different form for their relationship.

So, the consideration of Christian marriage should be viewed within this larger context. *Christian marriage* is a specific Christian calling and covenant which also includes the civil contract. A *civil marriage* is a specific legal contract which does not necessarily involve Christian values and responsibilities yet. *An intimate relationship without either form of recognition* is a publicly undefined relationship and may be most appropriate under certain conditions at certain times in one's life. Our priest is available to help you discern the best way to be respectful to your relationship and respectful of the Church.

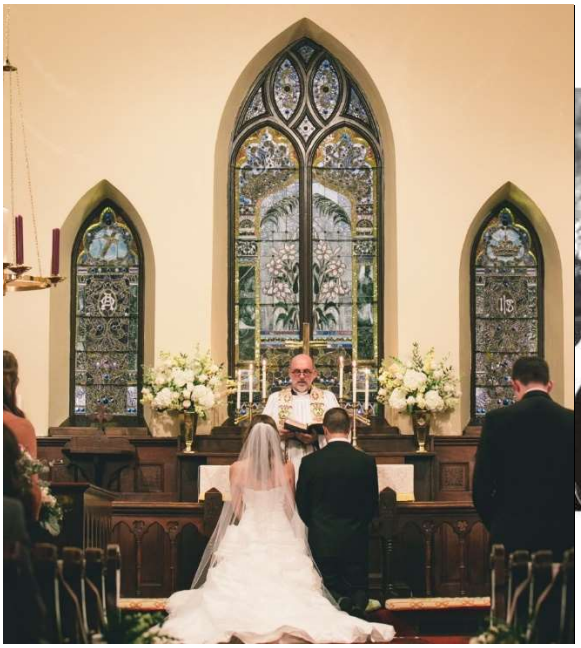
Grace Church provides Christian weddings within the context of the Episcopal tradition.

The Nature of Christian Marriage

The canons and liturgies of the Episcopal Church reflect an ancient understanding of Christian marriage. This is reflected in a document given to each couple for their consent called "The Declaration of Intention":

> "We understand the teaching of the church that God's purpose for our marriage is for our mutual joy, for the help and comfort we will give to each other in prosperity and adversity, and when it is God's will, for the gift and heritage of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of God.
>
> We also understand that our marriage is to be unconditional, mutual, exclusive, faithful, and lifelong; and we engage to make the utmost effort to accept these gifts and fulfill these duties, with the help of God and the support of our community."

Historically, Christian marriage has been between a man and a woman, and continues to be so. After a long discernment period in the Episcopal Church, we have become aware of the movement of the Holy Spirit to open the marriage relationship to same-sex couples. This was subsequently affirmed from a legal standpoint by the Supreme Court and the Commonwealth of Virginia. Grace Church therefore receives all couples for the discernment of marriage.



Weddings at Grace Church and Other Venues

The policies of this guide specifically apply to weddings held at Grace Church. Clergy may be available for off-site weddings by separate arrangement.

Requirements for Christian Marriage at Grace

Ordinarily, couples desiring to be married at Grace would be active members of the congregation—people we can know, grow with, love, and support in our life together. It is our hope that if this is not possible that we can encourage and support you in sustaining your relationship with another Christian community, finding a new Christian community of your own, or rediscovering Christian faith and practice anew.

At least one person in the couple is a baptized Christian.

Both partners must be willing to consent to "The Declaration of Intention" (page 17).

If either partner has been divorced, the clergy are required to make application to the Bishop of Virginia for permission to proceed with the marriage. See the next section on Remarriages.

A complete marriage application must precede the intended date of the wedding by at least six months. One year is recommended, especially if a remarriage is involved.

Weddings are not conducted during Advent (December), Lent (prior to Easter), major feast days (i.e. Christmas or Easter), Sundays, or when our clergy are not available.

Weddings are held in the church only.

The initial decision on whether a couple may be married at Grace Church is made by our Rector.

The officiating clergy have the right to decline to solemnize a wedding at any time.

If the couple is not currently attending a church then the clergy will assist the couple in identifying an Episcopal parish in their area and ask them to attend there at least once before their final meeting. The liturgy of the wedding service assumes that Christian marriage is most fulfilled by living within a community of faith which can uphold the couple in their life together.

Further requirements are noted below.

Remarriages

The policies of the Diocese of Virginia for solemnization of marriage after divorce, consistent with the Canons of the Episcopal Church, are based on two Christian truths: that marriage is a lifelong union, instituted of God, signifying the union between Christ and his Church; and that God, in his infinite mercy and redeeming love, creates new life in death, gives hope where there is despair, and forgives our sins.

So the Church maintains its belief in the will of God for lifelong marriages that are signs of his steadfast love and at the same time, with no dilution of that belief, the Church may bless the unions of those whose prior marriages have died, and who, in faith, while accepting the consequences of their prior commitments, covenant with one another in a mature Christian marriage.

These guidelines seek to assist persons in building strong marriages after the deaths of their prior marriage. The Church's experience has taught that time is necessary for healing, for learning and for forgiveness. So the norm is that at least one year will have lapsed between the final decree of divorce and the date of petitioning to the Bishop for a remarriage. (If one year has not elapsed, at least 18 months of uninterrupted separation must occur before consent is granted.)

The intent of these guidelines is also to seek to assist persons in resolving issues left from a prior marriage and in accepting responsibility for commitments, such as child support, that continue from the prior marriage.

The clergy seeks the Bishop's consent to solemnize such a marriage. No date for marriage should be firmly set and none announced until consent has been received. No petition will be considered unless all final decrees of divorce have been issued.

The couple will be expected to consult with a licensed professional counselor or a certified pastoral counselor (e.g., a licensed psychiatrist, psychologist, or a pastoral counselor accredited by a professional association) satisfactory to the clergy, at the expense of the couple.

After such consultation and counseling as the professional counselor may require, the clergy should receive a written statement from the counselor, together with a release from the couple authorizing release of the statement. The counselor's statement should express his or her opinion that whatever issues were involved in the dissolution of the former marriages appear to be sufficiently resolved and that, in the counselor's opinion, the couple has a reasonable chance to establish a lifetime union of mature intimacy. In situations where the person had already received professional counseling at the time of or subsequent to the dissolution of the former marriages, a statement from that counselor to the effect that the person involved has adequately resolved the issues related to the former marriages and is prepared for a lifelong commitment may be sufficient.

Christian marriage is entered into within the community of faith and the liturgy for the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage emphasizes the congregation's responsibility in upholding the couple in their marriage. It is a reasonable expectation, therefore, that the couple, or at least one party with the support of the other, intends to live out their marriage in the community of faith as members of some congregation.

Religious and Spiritual Counseling

Since Christian marriage is itself a religious and spiritual practice, the clergy and the couple will have conversation around the following topics:

- What is the history and current status of your relationship to a religious community?
- What religious history is shared and different within the couple?
- What current religious and spiritual practices are shared? Which are most life-affirming and helpful?
- What current religious and spiritual practices are individual? What does each desire of the other in support of individual practices?
- What religious and spiritual differences are the most difficult for the relationship?
- Identify and address stumbling blocks to theological understanding and Christian practice
- Identify the differences between living together, civil marriage, and Christian marriage
- Identify marriage as a spiritual practice within the context of Holy Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and a devotion to Christ

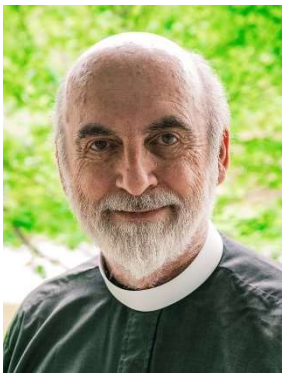
A Religious and Spiritual Life Worksheet is available in this guide.

Pre-Marital Counseling

In the interim between the first and final meetings with the officiating clergy it will be expected that the couple will consult with a professional counselor or a member of the clergy for premarital

counseling in their area, at the expense of the couple. Couples seeking remarriage must seek a professional counselor. The officiating clergy should receive a written statement from the counselor or clergy, subject to the couple's release, that simply acknowledges that such counseling has been accomplished. This statement is due by the final meeting with the officiating clergy.

Clergy



Our Priest and Rector, Miles Smith, presides at all weddings at Grace. With his permission, other Episcopal clergy may preside by themselves or guest officiants may assist Miles in a wedding. Miles can be reached at gmiles@gracekeswick.org.

Liturgy

In the Episcopal tradition, all liturgies are carefully discerned by the church as a whole and then authorized for use. Accordingly, there are two different liturgies authorized for use in Episcopal churches at this time. Couples may choose either one in consultation with the officiant. Copies are included in this guide.

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage (The Book of Common Prayer version)

- This is the traditional rite of The Book of Common Prayer that has basically been in existence for over five hundred years and has been the source of most protestant Christian weddings in America.
- The bride may be presented according to traditional custom or the couple may be presented as in the contemporary version.

The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage (2015 version)

- This draws from the prayer book version but allows for more participation and choices.
- It is structured more like a Sunday service and can in fact be used as a Sunday morning service for couples who are parishioners.
- The couple and party may be seated for the beginning.
- There are more options for scripture lessons.
- The couple is presented instead of the bride alone and the presentation is done by both families.
- The Declaration of Consent by the couple and the statement of congregational support is more extensive.
- The wedding vows are different and there are two options.
- The prayers are more like the Sunday Prayers of the People.

Music

Our Music Director and Organist, Jonathan Schakel provides the music.

All music at the wedding must be approved and coordinated by Jonathan. He can make suggestions for appropriate selections for the service and assist with arrangements with other musicians as desired. Any additional musicians would be at the couple's expense.

Once the initial consent of the clergy has been given, the couple will contact Jonathan at musicdirector@gracekeswick.org.

Wedding Direction

Our Wedding Director, Linda Crummette, presides at the rehearsal and assists with various logistical details relevant to the rehearsal and wedding, including flowers. Any additional wedding consultants would collaborate with her. Once the initial consent of the clergy has been given, the couple will contact Linda at lindacrummette@gmail.com.

Fees

Fees are to be paid by separate checks or an electronic payment as directed.

If any checks are mailed then please send to: Grace Church, PO Box 43, Keswick, VA 22947.

State and National Non-Members: $5000
This includes those who are neither members of Grace Church nor the children of members and who have residency more than 20 miles from the church.

- $500 Refundable Deposit
- $500 Miles Smith
- $500 Jonathan Schakel
- $500 Linda Crummette
- $3000 Grace Episcopal Church

Local Non-Members: $2000
This includes those who are neither members of Grace Church nor the children of members and who have residency within 20 miles from the church.

- $500 Refundable Deposit
- $500 Miles Smith

- $500 Jonathan Schakel
- $500 Linda Crummette

Church Members: $1000
This includes those where at least one of the couple is a member of Grace Church or the child of members.

- $500 Jonathan Schakel
- $500 Linda Crummette

Any significant travel by the officiant may also require reimbursement.

The use of the Parish Hall for receptions requires an application and fee according to a separate policy. This may be arranged through our Parish Administrator, Kathy Trossi, at parishadministrator@gracekeswick.org.

Applying for Christian Marriage at Grace Church

After reviewing the entirety of this Guide, to inquire about a wedding at Grace Church please email our Priest and Rector, Miles Smith, gmiles@gracekeswick.org with the following information:

1. Your anticipated wedding date
2. If you have been previously married
3. Your personal history, if any, with Grace Church
4. Acknowledgement that you have reviewed these guidelines

Once he has confirmed availability then you will receive a wedding application. After this completed application has been received, initial consent from him has been given, and the deposit from non-parishioners has been received then the date is established.

First Meeting with the Clergy

Once the initial consent of the officiating clergy has been given, it is the couple's responsibility to arrange for the first meeting with them sometime within the next three months. The couple should review in advance of the meeting the entirety of this Guide and complete the "Religious and Spiritual Life Worksheet".

These will be reviewed in the first meeting. The inside of the church will be toured, general questions and answers will be reviewed, pre-marital counseling discussed, the liturgies reviewed, "The Declaration of Intention" and "Worksheet" discussed, and marriage resources will be received for further reading.

Final Meeting with the Clergy

The couple will also be responsible for scheduling a final meeting with the clergy a few months prior to the wedding. The certification of pre-marital counseling will be confirmed, the marriage license discussed, and any follow-up on "The Declaration of Intention" and "Religious and Spiritual Life Worksheet" discussed. The wedding program and final logistics can be reviewed. The remainder of fees will be due at this time.

Flowers

Please discuss flowers with Linda Crummette. The only flowers permitted are those for the altar, flowers hung from ribbons on the pews, and wreaths or ribbons on the front doors of the church. Artificial flowers are not permitted. Runners down the center aisle are not permitted.

Photography

Professional photography and videography are permitted throughout the service from the rear of the church or the gallery, with existing light only. The basic rule of thumb is that photography should not distract the conduct of the worship service. Photography by guests during the service is not permitted.

It is the responsibility of the couple to inform professionals of these expectations. Professionals should check in with the clergy before the service.

Alcohol

No alcoholic beverages may be consumed prior to the rehearsal or the wedding. There are three basic reasons:

1. Participants need to be mindful of their roles at the rehearsal.
2. A church wedding is a worship service.
3. The actual validity of the marriage itself depends upon the sober exchange of vows by the couple.

Timing

For a Saturday wedding, the Friday rehearsal generally begins at 5 or 5:30pm. The rehearsal takes about 45 minutes. The rehearsal begins on time.

Weddings take approximately 30 minutes.

Church Capacity and Parking

The church nave seats 173 people comfortably (195 maximum). Parking is sufficient for either. Large buses can enter and exit the front gate with appropriate caution.

Program

Wedding programs, if desired, are the responsibility of the couple. Our priest should be consulted prior to the final printing. Sample outlines are included below and programs from prior weddings are available for review.

Marriage License and Certificate

The marriage license must be secured in Virginia but it can be from any county within Virginia. They are valid for sixty days after issuance. To contact our Albemarle County Clerk of Court call 434-972-4083. For more information about Virginia's laws:
https://www.virginia.org/meetings/weddings/getting-married/

The marriage license must be brought to the rehearsal. The officiating clergy is responsible for returning the license to the appropriate Clerk of Court. The clergy will provide a church certificate to keep.

All Saints Chapel

All Saints Chapel has been a mission of Grace Church since 1929 and is an active worshipping community connected with Grace Church. The chapel is located in Stony Point at 3929 Stony Point Road. It is a rustic, small structure capable of seating a maximum of 50 people. Weddings conducted there must provide their own officiant, director, and musician. There is a small organ. There is not a center aisle. For more information about fees and availability, contact Mary Leslie Tise at mary.tise@gmail.com.

Religious and Spiritual Life Worksheet

A requirement of Christian marriage is that at least one person in the couple is a baptized Christian. This is to be completed by each of the couple in preparation for the first meeting with the clergy.

Definitions:

- *"religious practices" are practices that you do in connection with a religion or Christian denomination*
- *"spiritual practices" are practices that are not explicitly related to a religion or denomination but which are life-affirming, expansive, and constructive*

1. What is the history and current status of your relationship to a religious community?

2. What religious experiences are shared and different from your partner's? Tell stories of your experiences of participation in a religious community, experiences of God, or what it has been like not participating in a religious community.

3. What current religious practices, if any, do you share with your partner? What are most life-affirming and helpful?

4. What current religious practices, if any, are specific to you? What do you desire of your partner in support of your individual practice?

5. What current spiritual practices, if any, do you share with your partner? What are most life-affirming and helpful?

6. What current spiritual practices, if any, are specific to you? What do you desire of your partner in support of your individual practice?

7. What religious and spiritual differences, if any, are most difficult for your relationship?

8. Are there any practical or theological issues that have become stumbling blocks for Christian practice for which pastoral conversation would be helpful?

9. Do you have questions about the difference between living together, a civil marriage, and a Christian marriage?

Pre-marital Counseling Questions

The counselor you choose to work with will have their own approach and questions for you to consider. Here is a list of sample questions:

1. Share your personal history, including your family background, the relationship you have with your parents and your parents have with each other that may act as a model for your relationship. What are some of the major events in your life?
2. Share your dating history. How did you meet and how long ago? What attracted you to one another? What are some of your partner's most endearing characteristics?
3. What brought you to the point of deciding to marry?
4. What is your idea of marriage?
5. What are your strengths? Make a list.
6. What are your limitations? List
7. What are your most highly held values? In other words, what's important to you in life. Place in priority.
8. What are some of your life goals as an individual?
9. What do you see as joint goals as a couple?
10. In what ways are you alike?
11. What ways are you different? How do you cope with the differences?
12. How do you argue and how do you resolve an argument?
13. How important is a sexual relationship to you? Are you comfortable discussing the subject with each other?
14. What plans to you have regarding children? What are your parenting skills?
15. What are your plans for developing a religious/spiritual life for yourself and together as a couple?
16. How do you plan to raise your children regarding religious/spiritual practices?
17. Who will handle the family finances? How will that work?
18. How is your relationship with your future in-laws? Holidays will be decided where and with whom on what basis?
19. How do you like to spend your time – individually and together? Do you have sports, hobbies, etc. that you do separately?

Additional questions for those who are re-marrying after divorce:

1. Please share previous marriage information: How long were you married? Do you have children by this marriage? How is custody shared? What brought about the dissolution of the marriage?
2. What changes might you have made since the dissolution that may have contributed to it?
3. What is different about the current relationship? What is similar?

The Declaration of Intention

This is to be discussed at the first meeting with the clergy and signed by the final meeting.

We understand the teaching of the church that God's purpose for our marriage is for our mutual joy, for the help and comfort we will give to each other in prosperity and adversity, and when it is God's will, for the gift and heritage of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of God.

We also understand that our marriage is to be unconditional, mutual, exclusive, faithful, and lifelong; and we engage to make the utmost effort to accept these gifts and fulfill these duties, with the help of God and the support of our community.

Signed:

_____

_____

Date:

_____

Program Outline: The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage
(The Book of Common Prayer version)

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage

Prelude

Seating of the Family

Processional

Bridal Processional

Dearly Beloved

Declaration of Consent

Congregational Support
Response: **We will.**

Presentation of the Bride [optional]

Ministry of the Word
(Scripture lesson(s))
Homily

The Marriage
Vows
Blessing and Giving of Rings

Prayers
The Lord's Prayer
Intercessions

Blessing of the Marriage

Peace
Response: **And also with you.**

Presentation of the Bridge and Groom

Recessional

Worship Leaders

Officiant
Organist

The Wedding Party

Parents of the Bride
Matron of Honor
Bridesmaids
Parents of the Groom
Best Man
Groomsmen
(Readers)
(Special Thanks)

Program Outline: The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage
(2015 version)

The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage

Prelude

(Seating of the Family)

Processional (Hymn)

Bridal Processional

Gathering
(Responses are printed as selected)

Collect of the Day
Response: **And also with you.**

Lessons
(Scripture lesson(s))
Homily

Witnessing of the Vows and the Blessing of the Covenant
Presentation of the Couple
Declaration of Consent
Congregational Support
Response: **We will.**

Prayers
Intercessions
Response after each petition: **Hear our prayer.**
The Lord's Prayer

The Marriage
Vows
Blessing and Giving of Rings

Blessing of the Couple

Peace
Response: **And also with you.**

(Presentation of the Bridge and Groom)

(The Holy Communion)

Recessional

Postlude

Worship Leaders

Officiant
Organist

The Wedding Party

Parents of the Bride
Matron of Honor
Bridesmaids
Parents of the Groom
Best Man
Groomsmen
(Readers)
(Special Thanks)

Full Text of The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage
(The Book of Common Prayer version)

At the time appointed, the persons to be married, with their witnesses, assemble in the church or some other appropriate place. During their entrance, a hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.
Then the Celebrant, facing the people and the persons to be married, addresses the congregation and says

Dearly beloved: We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of _____ and _____ in Holy Matrimony. The joining of two people in a life of mutual fidelity signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, and so it is worthy of being honored among all people.

The union of two people in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the gift of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Therefore marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

Into this holy union _____ and _____ now come to be joined. If any of you can show just cause why they may not lawfully be married, speak now; or else for ever hold your peace.

Then the Celebrant says to the persons to be married
I require and charge you both, here in the presence of God, that if either of you know any reason why you may not be united in marriage lawfully, and in accordance with God's Word, you do now confess it.

The Declaration of Consent

The Celebrant says to one member of the couple, then to the other
_____, will you have this *woman/man/person* to be your *wife/husband/spouse*; to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love *her/him*, comfort *her/him*, honor and keep *her/him*, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to *her/him* as long as you both shall live?
Answer I will.

The Celebrant then addresses the congregation, saying
Will all of you witnessing these promises do all in your power to uphold these two persons in their marriage?
People We will.

If there is to be a presentation or a giving in marriage, it takes place at this time.

The Ministry of the Word

The Celebrant then says to the people
The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.
Celebrant Let us pray.

O gracious and everliving God, you have created humankind in your image: Look mercifully upon _____ and _____ who come to you seeking your blessing, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep the promises and vows they make; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*.

Then one or more of the following passages from Holy Scripture is read. Other readings from Scripture suitable for the occasion may be used. If there is to be a Communion, a passage from the Gospel always concludes the Readings.

Genesis 1:26–28 *(Male and female he created them)*
Song of Solomon 2:10–13; 8:6–7
(Many waters cannot quench love)
Tobit 8:5b–8 (*New English Bible*)
(That she and I may grow old together)
1 Corinthians 13:1–13 *(Love is patient and kind)*
Ephesians 3:14–19
(The Father from whom every family is named)
Ephesians 5:1–2 *(Walk in love, as Christ loved us)*
Colossians 3:12–17
(Love which binds everything together in harmony)
1 John 4:7–16 *(Let us love one another, for love is of God)*

Between the Readings, a psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said. Appropriate psalms are
Psalm 67
Psalm 127
Psalm 128

Appropriate passages from the Gospels are
Matthew 5:1–10 *(The Beatitudes)*
Matthew 5:13–16 *(You are the light ... Let your light so shine)*
Matthew 7:21, 24–29 *(Like a wise man who built his house upon the rock)*
John 15:9–12 *(Love one another as I have loved you)*

The Homily

The Marriage

Each member of the couple, in turn, takes the right hand of the other and says
In the Name of God, I, _____, take you, _____, to be my *wife/husband/spouse*,
to have and to hold from this day forward,
for better for worse, for richer for poorer,
in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish,
until we are parted by death.
This is my solemn vow.

The Priest may ask God's blessing on rings as follows
Bless, O Lord, these rings to be signs of the vows by which _____ and _____ have bound themselves to each other; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The giver places the ring on the ring finger of the other's hand

and says
_____, I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow,
and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you,
in the Name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit [*or* in the Name of God].

Then the Celebrant joins the right hands of the couple and says
Now that _____ and _____
have given themselves to each other by solemn vows,
with the joining of hands and the giving and receiving of rings,
I pronounce that they are wed to one another,
in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder.
People Amen.

The Prayers

All standing, the Celebrant says
Let us pray together in the words our Savior taught us.
People and Celebrant
Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Adaptations, omissions, or insertions may be made to the form that follows.
Leader Let us pray.
Eternal God, creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation,
and giver of all grace: Look with favor upon the world you have
made, and for which your Son gave his life, and especially upon
_____ and _____
whom you make one flesh in Holy Matrimony. *Amen.*
Give them wisdom and devotion in the ordering of their common
life, that each may be to the other a strength in need, a counselor in
perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy. *Amen.*
Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their
spirits in your Spirit, that they may grow in love and peace with you
and one another all the days of their life. *Amen.*
Give them grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and
acknowledge their fault, and to seek each other's forgiveness and
yours. *Amen.*
Make their life together a sign of Christ's love to this sinful and
broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness
heal guilt, and joy conquer despair. *Amen.*
Bestow on them, if it is your will, the gift and heritage of children,
and the grace to bring them up to know you, to love you, and to
serve you. *Amen.*
Give them such fulfillment of their mutual affection that they may
reach out in love and concern for others. *Amen.*
Grant that all married persons who have witnessed these vows may

find their lives strengthened and their loyalties confirmed. *Amen.*
Grant that the bonds of our common humanity, by which all your children are united one to another, and the living to the dead, may be so transformed by your grace, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven; where, O Father, with your Son and the Holy Spirit, you live and reign in perfect unity, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Blessing of the Marriage

The People remain standing. The couple kneel, and the Priest says one of the following prayers

Most gracious God, we give you thanks for your tender love in sending Jesus Christ to come among us, to be born of a human mother, and to make the way of the cross to be the way of life. We thank you, also, for consecrating the union of two people in his Name. By the power of your Holy Spirit, pour out the abundance of your blessing upon _____ and _____ Defend them from every enemy. Lead them into all peace. Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle about their shoulders, and a crown upon their foreheads. Bless them in their work and in their companionship; in their sleeping and in their waking; in their joys and in their sorrows; in their life and in their death. Finally, in your mercy, bring them to that table where your saints feast for ever in your heavenly home; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

or this

O God, you have so consecrated the covenant of marriage that in it is represented the spiritual unity between Christ and his Church: Send therefore your blessing upon these your servants, that they may so love, honor, and cherish each other in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The couple still kneeling, the Priest adds this blessing

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favor look upon you, and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace; that you may faithfully live together in this life, and in the age to come have life everlasting. *Amen.*

The Peace

The Celebrant may say to the People

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People And also with you.

The newly married couple then greet each other.

Full Text: The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage (2015 version)

The Word of God

Gathering

The couple joins the assembly.
A hymn of praise, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.
The Presider says the following, the People standing

Presider Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
People Blessed be God, now and for ever. Amen.

In place of the above may be said
Presider Blessed be the one, holy, and living God.
People Glory to God for ever and ever.

From Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost
Presider Alleluia. Christ is risen.
People The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

In place of the above may be said
Presider Alleluia. Christ is risen.
People Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Then may be said
Presider Beloved, let us love one another,
People For love is of God.
Presider Whoever does not love does not know God,
People For God is love.
Presider Since God so loves us,
People Let us love one another.

The Presider may address the assembly in these words
Dear friends in Christ [*or* Dearly beloved],
in the name of God and the Church
we have come together today with
_____ and _____,
to witness the vows they make,
committing themselves to one another
in marriage [according to the laws of the state *or* civil jurisdiction of _____].

Forsaking all others,
they will bind themselves to one another
in a covenant of mutual fidelity and steadfast love,
remaining true to one another in heart, body, and mind,
as long as they both shall live.

The lifelong commitment of marriage
is not to be entered into lightly or thoughtlessly,
but responsibly and with reverence.
Let us pray, then, that God will give them the strength
to remain steadfast in what they vow this day.
Let us also pray for the generosity
to support them in the commitment they undertake
and for the wisdom to see God at work in their life together.

Or this, for those who have previously made a lifelong commitment to one another

Dear friends in Christ [*or* Dearly beloved],
in the name of God and the Church
we have come together today with
_____ and _____
to witness the sacred vows they make this day as they are married
[according to the laws of the state *or* civil jurisdiction of
_____],
and reaffirm their commitment to one another.

Forsaking all others,
they will renew their covenant of mutual fidelity and steadfast love,
remaining true to one another in heart, body, and mind,
as long as they both shall live.

Let us pray, then, that God will give them the strength
to remain steadfast in what they vow this day.
Let us also pray for the generosity
to support them in the commitment they undertake,
and for the wisdom to see God at work in their life together.

The Collect of the Day

Presider The Lord be with you. *or* God be with you.
People And also with you.
Presider Let us pray.

The Presider says one of the following Collects

God of abundance:
assist by your grace _____ and
_____,
whose covenant of love and fidelity we witness this day.
Grant them your protection, that with firm resolve
they may honor and keep the vows they make;
through Jesus Christ our Savior,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

or this

Almighty and everliving God:
look tenderly upon _____ and
_____,
who stand before you in the company of your Church.
Let their life together bring them great joy.
Grant them so to love selflessly and live humbly,
that they may be to one another and to the world
a witness and a sign of your never-failing love and care;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, to the ages of ages. *Amen.*

or this

O God, faithful and true,
whose steadfast love endures for ever:
we give you thanks for sustaining _____
and _____ in the life they share

and for bringing them to this day.
Nurture them and fill them with joy in their life together,
continuing the good work you have begun in them;
and grant us, with them, a dwelling place eternal in the heavens
where all your people will share the joy of perfect love,
and where you, with the Son and the Holy Spirit, live and reign,
one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

or this, for those who bring children
Holy Trinity, one God,
three Persons perfect in unity and equal in majesty:
Draw together with bonds of love and affection
_____ and _____,
who with *their families*
seek to live in harmony and forbearance all their days,
that their joining together will be to us
a reflection of that perfect communion
which is your very essence and life,
O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
who live and reign in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

The Lessons

The people sit. Then one or more of the following passages of Scripture is read. If the Holy Communion is to be celebrated, a passage from the Gospels always concludes the Readings. When the blessing is celebrated in the context of the Sunday Eucharist, the Readings of the Sunday are used, except with the permission of the Bishop.

Ruth 1:16-17
1 Samuel 18:1b, 3, 20:16-17, 42a;
or 1 Samuel 18:1-4
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
Song of Solomon 2:10-13, 8:6-7
Micah 4:1-4
Romans 12:9-18
1 Corinthians 12:31b-13:13
2 Corinthians 5:17-20
Galatians 5:14, 22-26
Ephesians 3:14-21
Colossians 3:12-17
1 John 3:18-24
1 John 4:7-16, 21

When a biblical passage other than one from the Gospels is to be read, the Reader announces it with these words
Reader A Reading from _____.
After the Reading, the Reader may say
The Word of the Lord.
or
Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.
or
Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.
People Thanks be to God.

Between the Readings, a psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said. Appropriate Psalms are
Psalm 65
Psalm 67
Psalm 85:7-13
Psalm 98
Psalm 100

Psalm 126
Psalm 127
Psalm 133
Psalm 148
Psalm 149:1-5

Appropriate passages from the Gospels are
Matthew 5:1-16
Mark 12:28-34
Luke 6:32-38
John 15:9-17
John 17:1-2, 18-26

The Homily

The Witnessing of the Vows and the Blessing of the Covenant

The couple comes before the assembly. If there is to be a presentation, the presenters stand with the couple, and the Presider says to them

Presider Who presents _____ and _____ as they seek the blessing of God and the Church on their love and life together?
Presenters We do.

Presider Will you love, respect, and pray for _____ and _____, and do all in your power to stand with them in the life they will share?
Presenters We will.

The Presider then addresses the couple, saying

_____ and _____,
you have come before God and the Church to exchange [*and renew*] solemn vows with one another and to ask God's blessing.

The Presider addresses one member of the couple, saying

Presider _____, do you freely and unreservedly offer yourself to _____?
Answer I do.

Presider Will you [*continue to*] live together in faithfulness and holiness of life as long as you both shall live?
Answer I will, with God's help.

The Presider addresses the other member of the couple, saying

Presider _____, do you freely and unreservedly offer yourself to _____?
Answer I do.

Presider Will you [*continue to*] live together in faithfulness and holiness of life as long as you both shall live?
Answer I will, with God's help.

The assembly stands, the couple faces the People, and the Presider addresses them, saying

Presider Will all of you gathered to witness these vows do all in your power to uphold and honor this couple in the covenant they make?
People We will.

Presider Will you pray for them, especially in times of trouble, and celebrate with them in times of joy?
People We will.

The Prayers

The Presider then introduces the prayers
Presider Then let us pray for _____ and _____ in their life together and for the concerns of this community.

A Deacon or another leader bids prayers for the couple. Prayers for the Church and for the world, for the concerns of the local community, for those who suffer or face trouble, and for the departed are also appropriate. If the rite takes place in the principal Sunday worship of the congregation, the rubric concerning the Prayers of the People on page 359 of the Book of Common Prayer is followed. Adaptations, omissions, or insertions may be made to the form that follows.

Leader For _____ and _____, seeking your blessing and the blessing of your holy people;
Loving God, *or* Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.
Leader For a spirit of loving-kindness to shelter them all their days;
Loving God, *or* Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.
Leader For friends to support them and communities to enfold them;
Loving God, *or* Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.
Leader For those who seek justice, peace, and concord among nations;
Loving God, *or* Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.
Leader For those who are sick or suffering, homeless or poor;
Loving God, *or* Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.
Leader For victims of violence and those who inflict it;
Loving God, *or* Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.
Leader For communion with all who have died [especially those whom we remember this day: _____];
Loving God, *or* Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.
Leader For peace in their home and love in their family;
Loving God, *or* Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.
Leader For the grace and wisdom to care for the children you entrust to them [*or* may entrust to them];
Loving God, *or* Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.
Leader For the honesty to acknowledge when they hurt each other, and the humility to seek each other's forgiveness and yours;
Loving God, *or* Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.
Leader For the outpouring of your love through their work and

witness;
Loving God, *or* Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.
Leader For the strength to keep the vows each of us has made;
Loving God, *or* Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.
The leader may add one or more of the following biddings
Leader For all who have been reborn and made new in the waters of Baptism;
Loving God, *or* Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.
Leader For those who lead and serve in communities of faith;
Loving God, *or* Lord, in your mercy,
People Hear our prayer.

The Presider concludes the Prayers with the following or another appropriate Collect
Giver of every gift, source of all goodness,
hear the prayers we bring before you for
_____ and _____,
who seek your blessing this day.
Strengthen them as they share in the saving work of Jesus,
and bring about for them and for all you have created
the fullness of life he promised,
who now lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Leader
As our Savior Christ
has taught us,
we now pray,
People and Leader
Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.

or this
Leader
And now, as our Savior
Christ has taught us,
we are bold to say,
People and Leader
Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Marriage

The people sit. The couple stands, facing the Presider.

Presider _____ and _____,
I invite you now, illumined by the Word of God
and strengthened by the prayer of this community,
to make your covenant before God and the Church.

Each member of the couple, in turn, takes the hand of the other
and says

In the name of God,
I, _____, give myself to you,
_____, and take you to myself.
I will support and care for you by the grace of God:
in times of sickness, in times of health.
I will hold and cherish you in the love of Christ:
in times of plenty, in times of want.
I will honor and love you with the Spirit's help:
in times of anguish, in times of joy,
forsaking all others, as long as we both shall live.
This is my solemn vow.

or this

In the name of God,
I, _____, give myself to you,
_____, and take you to myself.
I will support and care for you:
in times of sickness, in times of health.
I will hold and cherish you:
in times of plenty, in times of want.
I will honor and love you:
in times of anguish, in times of joy,
forsaking all others, as long as we both shall live.
This is my solemn vow.

If rings are to be exchanged, they are brought before the Presider,
who prays using the following words

Let us pray.
Bless, O God, these rings as signs of the enduring covenant
_____ and _____
have made with each other,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The two people place the rings on the fingers of one another,
first the one, then the other, saying

_____, I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow,
and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you,
in the name of God. *or* in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

If the two have previously given and worn rings as a symbol of their
commitment, the rings may be blessed on the hands of the couple,
the Presider saying

Let us pray.
By the rings which they have worn, faithful God,

_____ and _____
have shown to one another and the world
their love and faithfulness.
Bless now these rings,
that from this day forward
they may be signs of the vows _____ and
_____ have exchanged
in your presence and in the communion of your Church,
through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Pronouncement

The Presider joins the right hands of the couple and says
Now that _____ and _____
have exchanged vows of love and fidelity
in the presence of God and the Church,
I pronounce that they are
married [according to the laws of the state *or* civil jurisdiction of
_____]
and bound to one another
as long as they both shall live. *Amen.*

Blessing of the Couple

As the couple stands or kneels, the Presider invokes God's blessing
upon them, saying
Let us pray.
Most gracious God,
we praise you for the tender mercy and unfailing care
revealed to us in Jesus the Christ
and for the great joy and comfort bestowed upon us
in the gift of human love.
We give you thanks for _____ and
_____,
and the covenant of faithfulness they have made.
Pour out the abundance of your Holy Spirit upon them.
Keep them in your steadfast love;
protect them from all danger;
fill them with your wisdom and peace;
lead them in holy service to each other and the world.

The Presider continues with one of the following
God the Father,
God the Son,
God the Holy Spirit,
bless, preserve, and keep you,
and mercifully grant you rich and boundless grace,
that you may please God in body and soul.
God make you a sign of the loving-kindness and steadfast fidelity
manifest in the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior,
and bring you at last to the delight of the heavenly banquet,
where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

or this
God, the holy and undivided Trinity,
bless, preserve, and keep you,
and mercifully grant you rich and boundless grace,
that you may please God in body and soul.
God make you a sign of the loving-kindness and steadfast fidelity

manifest in the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior,
and bring you at last to the delight of the heavenly banquet,
where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The Peace

The Presider bids the Peace.

Presider The peace of the Lord be always with you.
People And also with you.

In place of the above may be said

Presider The peace of Christ be always with you.
People And also with you.

The newly married couple then greet each other.

Checklist

- Review this Guide
- Inquire with the Priest
- Receive and return wedding application
- Send deposit, if required
- Remarriages: Arrange for Bishop's consent via the Priest
- Arrange for first meeting with the Priest within three months
- Review wedding liturgies
- First meeting with the Priest
- Contact the Music Director
- Contact the Wedding Director
- Arrange pre-marital counseling
- Attend a local Episcopal parish, if applicable
- Consider scripture lessons and readers
- Plan to do the Religious and Spiritual Life Worksheets
- Interim meeting with the Priest as needed
- Review The Declaration of Intention and sign
- Final meeting with the Priest a few months prior to wedding
- Finalize liturgy, lessons, and wedding program
- Marriage license
- Remainder of fees payable
- Rehearsal
- Wedding